



2011 Legislative Concept Paper
January 18, 2010

Puget "SoundCorps" - Jobs for Puget Sound Recovery: Enhancing the Washington Conservation Corps Program

SB 5230; Sen. Ranker & **HB 1294;** Rep. Tharinger

ISSUE



By some estimates, the unemployment rate for young adults in Washington is more than 20 percent. Unfortunately, our veterans returning from wars in Afghanistan and Iraq make up a significant portion of this alarming number. However, we have an opportunity to achieve multiple policy objectives by **leveraging federal funds** for efforts to restore, protect, and preserve Puget Sound. The departments of Natural Resources (DNR) and Ecology are committed to the Puget Sound Partnership's Action Agenda. To that end, DNR and Ecology seek to enhance a job creation program to employ young adults and veterans to implement projects that support the cleanup of Puget Sound, while reforming and consolidating the state's conservation corps programs.



BACKGROUND

Right now, the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) is administered by the state departments of Ecology, Fish & Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Washington Parks and Recreation Commission. These services would be more efficient and streamlined if they were administered, managed, funded, and deployed by a single state agency.



Veterans Conservation Corps' (VCC) assists veterans by providing training and volunteer opportunities that help to restore and protect Washington State's natural resources. These efforts, along with the WCC, protect and restore our state's natural resources, including Puget Sound, while providing meaningful work experience for Washington's young adults and veterans.

PROPOSAL

This legislation proposes that the four natural resource agencies' WCC programs



be consolidated into one within Ecology. This would streamline how government administers, manages, and funds the Washington Conservation Corps. The Veterans corps would remain with the Department of Veterans Affairs. This would create efficiencies and increase effectiveness for creating jobs and advancing statewide natural resource management priorities for the public benefit. In addition, DNR and Ecology propose enhancing the Washington Conservation Corps statute to include the Puget 'SoundCorps'.

This enhanced program would be made up of crews of young adults and crews of returning veterans in the VCC. Puget SoundCorps would leverage federal funds to conduct saltwater and watershed restoration projects that support the Puget Sound Action Agenda, and focus on projects located on state, local government, port and other public lands.

Potential Puget SoundCorps activities

SoundCorps crews activities to support the Puget Sound Action Agenda:

- ✓ Remove bulkheads, creosote marine pilings and other shoreline structures that are damaging habitat and polluting Puget Sound.
- ✓ Restore marine and near-shore habitat at toxic sediment cleanup sites.
- ✓ Repair stream and streamside habitat damaged by unauthorized uses of public lands.
- ✓ Control invasive species.
- ✓ Identify and remove fish passage barriers and other habitat and pollution issues.
- ✓ Repair or remove forest roads that are polluting Puget Sound streams with sediment.
- ✓ Replant damaged streamside areas.
- ✓ Engage in educational activities to aid the Puget Sound Partnership recover, protect, and preserve Puget Sound.

FISCAL IMPACT

No Fiscal Impact, Some Cost Savings, Leveraging Federal Funds

Consolidating the WCC into Ecology would create efficiencies and savings by reducing redundant administrative and support activities. The focus of 'SoundCorps' would be Puget Sound restoration on public lands, while ensuring that the program does not displace private sector companies. The program would:

- Leverage federal, local and private funding for Puget Sound recovery.
- Help ensure a collaborative approach for implementing the
- Puget Sound Action Agenda.
- Maximize the effectiveness of federal and state dollars spent on Puget Sound.



WCC information: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wcc/index.html

Special Accommodations

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Ecology publication number: 11-06-001